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The National Road in Indiana

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Pen Drawings by
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The National Road in Indiana

By Lee Burns

To fully understand the reasons that led to the building by the National Government of the great highway that crosses Central Indiana from east to west, we must go back to the movements that led to the building of the original Cumberland road to connect the Potomac river with the Ohio.

A half century before the smouldering discontent of the English colonists along the Atlantic coast with their home government burst into the flame of revolution, it was seen that a conflict was inevitable between English and French for control of the country between the Ohio and the Great Lakes, and for military reasons alone the English realized that a way to the west should be established across the Allegheny mountains.

From Quebec and Montreal, along the noble river St. Lawrence, and across the Great Lakes, French traders and explorers had found an easy way by water to the fertile valleys of the Mississippi, Wabash and Ohio, and had established a chain of trading posts extending to the gulf.

Yet comprehensive claims to most of this territory were made by Virginia, and English traders, who had followed the tedious trails across the mountains, were as familiar with the Ohio valley as any Frenchman.

In 1748 certain gentlemen of Virginia, including Mr. Augustine Washington, of Mt. Vernon, organized the Ohio Land Company and were granted by the English government six hundred thousand acres of land on the great waterway, which they planned to develop.

These plans were checked and the long foreseen conflict for control of this western country began when, in 1753, the Mar-

quis Duquesne, the French governor of Canada, despatched a force to open a way from Lake Erie to the Allegheny and established an outpost upon the bank of the river. In that same year Robert Dinwiddie of London was appointed Governor of Virginia. He had become one of the stockholders of the Ohio company and realized that the interests of both his government and the company required that the French be prevented from gaining control of the Ohio territory. Accordingly a message was forwarded requiring them to depart and warning them that if they did not the English would drive them off by force of arms.

The messenger who carried this summons, was George Washington, half brother to Augustine Washington, of the Ohio Company. George Washington was then but twenty-one. He had however, served as a surveyor in the rough country of the Shenandoah, knew the life of the frontier, and was competent to undertake the journey through the pathless mountain forests.

The French received him courteously but made it clear that they intended to hold the Ohio as their own. At the forks of the Ohio they had built Fort Duquesne and over their highway of waters they were receiving reinforcements of men and munitions from Canada.

A few months later a little force of Virginians under Washington's command started westward across the mountains to expel them from this territory. But first a way had to be cut through the trackless forests, the difficulties of transportation hampered them at every step and finally, outnumbered two to one, they were defeated by the French at the battle of Great Meadows. This defeat was caused in a great measure by the lack of a roadway for the transportation of their supplies.

A year later Major General Edward Braddock, newly arrived from England, led a force of two thousand men, with artillery trains and baggage, through the wilderness against

Fort Duquesne. Week after week they worked with axe and spade, making a way through the dense woods of the mountains for their stores and artillery, only to meet defeat.

It was not until 1758 that Fort Duquesne, was abandoned by the French, and then it was the campaign of the English against their lines of communication along the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes that forced their retirement. The next year Quebec was captured and control of the western territory reached by way of the St. Lawrence fell into English hands.

The treaty of 1763, which gave to the English all of the territory that the French had claimed east of the Mississippi, gave an impulse to the tide of migration over the mountains and into the fertile valleys of the west. This movement, that was checked somewhat during the war for Independence, began again in increased volume immediately after the fighting had ceased.

The claims of the United States to the western country had been made secure by the victories of George Rogers Clark at Kaskaskia and Vincennes and within a year after peace had been declared Washington again journeyed westward over the mountains studying the possibility of opening a means of transportation to connect the head waters of the Potomac with the Ohio. He was convinced that unless some better means were found for communication with the east the western settlers might find it to their interests to form an alliance with the Spaniards at New Orleans, which was readily accessible to them by water.

At his suggestion a series of conferences was held between representatives of Virginia and the neighboring states to consider the project, and from these discussions were developed far greater plans, that finally resulted in the formation of a federal union and the election of Washington to the Presidency.

During the next few years there was much discussion of the proposition to build a national road across the mountains.

Washington died before it assumed concrete form but its importance was recognized by everyone, although many leaders of public opinion, including Thomas Jefferson, believed that there was no constitutional authority for the construction by Congress of internal improvements.

Finally a solution was found that was satisfactory to everyone. Ohio was clamoring for admission to statehood, and in the act of Congress in 1802, enabling her people to form a state government, it was provided that five per cent of the amount received by the National government from the sale of public land within the state should be applied to laying out and building public roads from the navigable waters emptying into the Atlantic to the state, and through the same, such roads to be laid out under the authority of Congress and with the consent of the states through which they passed.

Similar provisions were afterwards incorporated in the acts that provided for the admission of Indiana, Illinois and Missouri, three-fifths of the fund being returned to the states for their own internal improvements.

In 1803 Congress made the first appropriation from the remaining two-fifths, the "two per cent fund", as it was called, for building a road across the Allegheny mountains to the Ohio. This was the official beginning of the great highway that finally ran for seven hundred miles to the Mississippi, crossing six states and costing, during the quarter century that it was under construction, nearly seven million dollars, a huge sum in those days.

This was equal to nearly half the amount paid by the United States for the great province of Louisiana, or, to use a more modern comparison, it represents the expenditures by this country for about four hours of the great war in Europe.

During the early years of the republic many other plans were proposed for highways and canals needed to bind together the scattered settlements, yet the national government under-

took nothing aside from the road to the west. The committee appointed by Congress to review this project recommended that the road across the mountains should run from the town of Cumberland, on the bank of the Potomac in the state of Maryland to some place on the Ohio river between Steubenville and Wheeling.

The debates in Congress show that a southern branch of the National road was also contemplated. In a speech made by Henry Clay he referred to the branch that would pass through Kentucky and Tennessee to Natchez and New Orleans. However, before the road was completed through Ohio and Indiana the great era of railroad building had begun, and the project for a southern highway was generally forgotten.

Immediately after receiving the report of their committee, Congress authorized the laying out and building of the Cumberland or National road, under the direction of the president of the United States, the road to be cleared of trees for a width of four rods and to have a carriage way in the middle paved with stone, gravel or sand.

This act was approved by Thomas Jefferson on March 29, 1806, and preliminary surveys were at once begun. The first contracts were let in April, 1811, for building the ten miles west of Cumberland, Maryland. During the next six years additional contracts were made and by 1818 United States mail coaches were running on the road between the cities of Washington and Wheeling, Virginia.

A flood of traffic immediately swept over this great highway. As early as the year 1822 it is recorded that a single one of the five commission houses at Wheeling unloaded over one thousand wagons and paid for the carrying of goods the sum of ninety thousand dollars.

Hardly had the road been completed when a constitutional question again threatened its existence. To secure funds for the constant repairs made necessary by the heavy travel, Con-

gress proposed to establish toll-gates along the road, but a bill for this purpose was vetoed by president Monroe on the ground that while the national government might have the power to make appropriations for public improvements, it had no right to assume jurisdiction over the land and levy tolls. Two years later, however, the same purpose was accomplished in a different way by a bill providing that the government should put the road in good repair and then turn it over for maintenance to the several states through which it passed. This bill was approved by President Monroe.

When the road reached Wheeling, Virginia, it came to a place where river navigation to the west was possible except during the winter, and steamers were plying the Ohio river when the Cumberland road was first opened. However, the interior parts of the states of Ohio and Indiana were becoming gradually settled and needed their own line of communication to the east. The demand for a road through the interior resulted in an act of Congress of May 15, 1820, by which there was appropriated $10,000.00 for laying out a road between Wheeling, Virginia, and a point on the Mississippi river between St. Louis and the mouth of the Illinois river, the road to be eighty feet wide and on a straight line.

Had the road been built on an exact straight line as directed it would have been several miles south of its final location, but during the summer of that year the site for a permanent seat of government for the new state of Indiana was selected, and at the next session of the General Assembly of Indiana, held at Corydon the following January, the town was named Indianapolis, orders were given to have it surveyed, and a memorial was sent by the Assembly to Congress asking that the line of the proposed "Western National Road" which was "esteemed to be fifteen miles south" should be located so as to reach the new capital, attention being called to the fact that at no other

place along White River for a distance of thirty miles was there so good a location for a bridge.

Accordingly when, in 1825, Congress made an appropriation for building the road as far as Zanesville, Ohio, and completing the surveys farther west, they passed an amendment to the act of 1820, offered by Jonathan Jennings, of Indiana, providing that the road should pass by the seats of government of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

The original field notes for the final survey in Indiana, made in 1827, are in the office of the Chief of Engineers of the War Department at Washington and photographic copies of them are in the State Library at Indianapolis. They are in four volumes and give distances in chains, the locations of mileposts, the name of settlers along the line, and full notes of streams and other natural points.

This work was in charge of Jonathan Knight, Commissioner, and Joseph Schower, surveyor. The field notes are in Knight's handwriting. There is also at the War Department a map made in 1827 under the direction of Jonathan Knight showing the location of the road across the state of Indiana. This shows that the road was to run due west from the Ohio line to Indianapolis, passing through the towns of Richmond and Centerville in Wayne County. Centerville was then the county seat. Two other towns shown in Wayne County as being near the road, Salisbury and Vandalia, have since disappeared.

From Centerville to Indianapolis there were then no towns along the road nor were there any between Indianapolis and Terre Haute. Between these last two points the road as located ran in practically a straight line, a little southwest, missing Danville, Greencastle and Bowling Green, the newly located seats of justice in the counties of Hendricks, Putnam and Clay.

The map of 1827 shows what was known as the "State Road" running nearly parallel with the proposed National

Road throughout the entire distance from Richmond to Terre Haute. This State Road was one of the roads that had been laid out by the state from what was known as the "three per cent fund", which was that part of the fund received from the sale of government land that Congress had placed at the disposal of the state for its own road building. While this Indiana State Road had been surveyed, only part of it had been cleared when the National Road survey was made.

The State road was planned to be about 100 feet wide but the fund was so insufficient that little could be done but cut away part of the timber. This served to admit the sunshine and dry out the ground, but at first these state roads were little more than bridle paths through the stumps and in bad weather they were practically impassable.

The government road from Cumberland to the west was 80 feet in width, the timber was grubbed, the ground was graded, and the bridges and culverts were built of stone. In the center was a track 30 to 40 feet wide, on which stage coaches could race abreast and the plans provided that this was to be macadamized with ten inches of stone.

The Field Notes of the surveyors in Indiana begin as follows:

"June 13, 1827. Commenced for the continuation of the location of the Cumberland Road at a stake 2′ 8″ high on the line dividing the states of Ohio and Indiana, 1 chain and 5 links from a notched beech and 1 chain and 9 links from a notched poplar."

Trees were used for most of the points of location. The character of the heavy timber in Indiana is shown by the mention in the first few pages of the survey of such trees as elm, walnut, hickory, sugar, linn, oak, buckeye, beech, blue ash and hackberry.

Between the state line and the settlement at Richmond the survey passed near the clearings made by Robert Hill, Dr.

Griffith and Samuel Charles. Two other settlers were noted between Richmond and Centerville, and seven more were noted between Centerville and the Western edge of the county. Now and then an orchard was noted in the clearings. This upper part of the Whitewater valley was at that time the most thickly settled part of Indiana along the line of the road. Eight or ten other houses were noted on the way to Indianapolis.

The surveyors reached Indianapolis, then a town of about seven hundred inhabitants, on July 5, 1827. East of town they came to the Brookville road leading to the lower Whitewater valley country and furnishing communication with Cincinnati, then the principal market town of this western territory. The field notes show that the new road was to run by "Widow Pogue's ditch", then across Pogue's Creek, and then continue to the east boundary of the town of Indianapolis, where it was to follow Washington Street to the west boundary of the town.

The survey for the road west of Indianapolis was begun September 10, 1827. It started from a stake at the west edge of the town plat and continued as a prolongation of Washington Street to White river. It was noted that a bridge 356 feet in length would be needed and the site for the west end of the bridge was located north of a notched buckeye tree. Just east of Eagle Creek the road passed the house of a Mr. Harris and west of the creek was the house of William Holmes. These were the only settlements west of the river in Marion county. On the east fork of White Lick in Hendricks County the survey ran north of the house of John Furnas. Ten or twelve more clearings were noted between there and Terre Haute, each being on the bank of a water course.

After struggling for over a month through heavy forests, wading creeks, and running their lines through the swampy lowlands, the surveyors came upon Jenck's distillery about five miles east of Terre Haute and located the road a few feet to

the south. This must have been a red letter day although it was the 13th of the month. The next day was Sunday, which must have been passed in the neighborhood of the distillery, but on Monday morning the surveyors started on across the Harrison Prairie, which was covered by water about a foot in depth, and by nightfall they had reached the edge of Terre Haute at the east end of Wabash Street and had located the road along that street to the Wabash river. The survey had passed through heavy timber from the eastern line of the state until it reached the Harrison prairie. Three days later the survey was completed to the Illinois state line which was marked by a stake near a notched elm tree and 13 chains, 12 links from the "six mile tree" on the state line.

The survey was continued to Vandalia, then the capital of Illinois, and finally the road was located to the Mississippi river but it was never graded and bridged by the government beyond Vandalia.

Throughout the survey the field notes indicated locations where stone could be found for bridges and culverts and the necessity was noted for building a number of short canals to divert streams that might prove troublesome.

The first appropriation for opening the road in Indiana was made in 1829. The amount was $51,600.00. It provided that the work should be carried on both east and west from Indianapolis under two superintendents, each of whom was to be paid $800.00 a year. Homer Johnson and John Milroy were appointed superintendents and in June they advertised for proposals to cut the timber for a road eighty feet wide, remove the stumps in the central thirty feet and do the necessary grading. It was planned to work east and west from Indianapolis until the appropriation was exhausted but the settlers along other parts of the surveys made such objections to this seeming dis-

THE OLD NATIONAL ROAD BRIDGE
OVER WHITE RIVER AT INDIANAPOLIS

From a drawing
by Willard C. Osler

crimination that word came from Washington to change the specifications.

New ones were therefore drawn that did not provide for removing the stumps. It was provided however that no stumps were to be over fifteen inches high and that those in the center of the road were to be rounded and trimmed so as to present no serious obstructions to carriages.

Letting of contracts on this basis was begun in Wayne County in September, and on October third, John Milroy wrote from Terre Haute that contracts had been completed for the entire distance across the state, the average price being $121.00 a mile, leaving as he said a handsome surplus for future work.

A few weeks later additional instructions came from Washington to have the stumps grubbed out. This cost about $75.00 a mile and left a series of mounds and holes that made the road impassable. Many complaints were made to those in charge of the work. In a letter written from Washington by Jonathan Knight the following February he said that he fully realized the condition of the road, but did not doubt the intention of Congress to have it graded and bridged.

During the next ten years Congress made an additional appropriation each year for the work in Indiana. The act of 1831 provided for a bridge over White river where a ferry had been operated for several years. The bridge was begun that same year and completed three years later. It was a covered structure built of hewed timbers of yellow poplar on stone piers and abutments and cost $18,000.00. This bridge was in use for sixty years and when torn down to make way for a more modern structure was still in serviceable condition.

Great excitement was caused in Indianapolis in the spring of 1831 by the appearance of the steamboat "Robert Hanna" that had been brought up White river to haul stone for the bridge. This seemed to be proof positive that the river was navigable. The entire population of nearly eleven hundred

people turned out to see the boat and a salute was fired from a cannon belonging to the local artillery company. However the boat grounded on an island where it stayed for several months and the stone was finally hauled on a flat boat.

Five years later a bridge was authorized over the Wabash. Stone was hauled for this bridge but it was never built, a ferry being used instead until a toll bridge was built several years later by private enterprise.

Hugh McCulloch, a director of the State Bank of Indiana, who made his first visit to Indianapolis in 1833, said that there were then but two bridges in the state, both built by the government on the National road.

By 1834 the road extended clear across the state. A large force of men was at work that year on the grades and embankments in Vigo County. Many of the pioneers made their start in life with money earned by working on the road. They were paid 62½c a day, which was higher than the usual rate. It is recorded that among those who shoveled dirt on the road in Clay county when it was under construction in the spring of 1833 was Morgan Ringo who earned in this way the money to buy his first 40 acres and who afterwards became the heaviest tax payer in the county.

In the newspapers of the day mention is frequently made of the enthusiasm caused by the building of the road and of the prosperity that it brought. The farmers supplied many teams and many of the contractors and laborers who came to work on the road became permanent settlers. High grades were thrown across the swamps, substantial bridges were built by engineers who understood the work and who had ample funds at their command, and for the first time a road to the east was made able to withstand the spring freshets that had washed away the weaker embankments of the settlers.

In 1836 while work on the road was still in progress, Congress seriously considered the matter of substituting a rail-

way for the highway west of Columbus, Ohio. The first railway in the United States, built ten years before, was a decided success, others were being built in every direction and it seemed evident that this was the coming means of transportation. After considerable discussion, however, it was decided to complete the road as originally planned, the appropriation of that year providing that the greatest possible continuous portion of the road in Ohio and Indiana should be completed so that the finished part might be surrendered to the states.

During the following year the road was macadamized through Indianapolis making Washington street the first paved street in town. This caused such an awakening of civic pride that the trustees soon afterwards established grades so that sidewalks and gutters could be built by the owners of adjoining property.

The last appropriation for work in Indiana was made in 1838, the total amount spent by the government in the state being $1,136,000.00.

Heavy immigration through central Indiana had begun before the National road was under way. In 1827 the Indiana Gazette noted that for a week the town had scarcely been free of immigrant wagons and in a later issue of the same year they said that often as many as thirty were camped together for the night. Most of this travel came on the Madison and Brookville roads from the Ohio river.

Practically all of the travel in Indiana before the Government road was in condition to be used was from south to north, along the water courses and the roads and trails from the Ohio, but during the next ten years a constant stream of immigration passed through Indianapolis on the National road, many of the settlers going to the Wabash country, being attracted by the fertility of the land and by the movement, begun in 1827, for a canal to connect the Wabash river with Lake Erie.

ENTRANCE AND ARCHED ALLEYWAY OF AN OLD HOUSE IN CENTERVILLE

Later on, during the years before the Civil war, a steady line of canvas covered emigrant wagons moved over the road to the far west, many going because of the discoveries of gold in Colorado. Inscribed on the canvas was often seen the destination of the travelers. One wagon that bore the legend "Pike's Peak or Bust" came trailing back a few months later with the laconic word, "Busted" added below the original inscription.

Although when the road was surveyed across Indiana the only town between Centerville, near the eastern boundary of the state, and Terre Haute near the western boundary, was Indianapolis, the capitol in the woods, within the next few years many towns were located that became busy and prosperous with the building of the highway.

In the boom days that followed, lots in Centerville sold rapidly and prices were high. Some of the streets, originally 100 feet wide were narrowed to 60 and even 40 feet, to gain more ground, residences were built flush with the sidewalk and even alleys were arched over to make more room. Several examples of such covered alleys may be seen there today.

East of Indianapolis, both Greenfield and Knightstown were established in 1828, the year following the survey, Knightstown being named in honor of Jonathan Knight the surveyor in charge of the road, and a year later the town of Cumberland was established and named for the road itself. Other settlements followed rapidly and in 1835 the little town of Vandalia, in Wayne County, was abandoned because the highway had passed a few miles to the south. As the highway did not go to Vandalia, Vandalia went to the highway. Some of the buildings were moved down to the big road and Cambridge City was established.

West of Indianapolis, Plainfield, Belleville, Stilesville, Putnamville and Harmony were all established within a few years of the location of the road, and all were prosperous towns dur-

ing the years that it was the only means of transportation between the east and west.

Putnamville was at one time a rival of Greencastle and came very near securing the location of DePauw University, but when later on the builders of the railroad from Terre Haute to Indianapolis decided to swing it north to Greencastle, missing Putnamville, Belleville and Stilesville, the growth of these towns came to an end. They are still picturesque communities, with a charm and serenity lacking in the busier railroad towns.

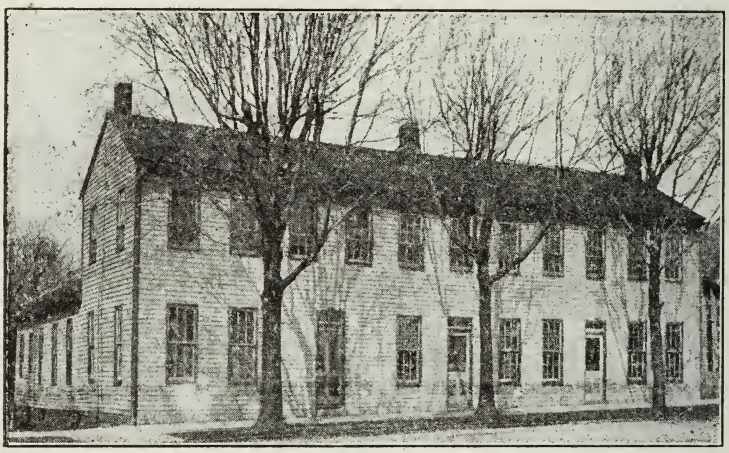
Brazil, the largest town established in Indiana along the National highway, was not located until 1844 and six years later had only eighty-four inhabitants but its location on the main line of travel finally caused the county seat to be moved there from Bowling Green. The first relay station for changing horses on the stage line east of Terre Haute was at the present site of Brazil and for several years was the only building there.

Among the first business ventures along the road were blacksmith and wagon shops that soon were made busy by the constantly increasing traffic. These together with a tavern, and a general store in which the postoffice was located, made the beginning of many a prosperous town. From the general stores went peddlers' wagons, that carried hardware, drugs, dry goods and other staple articles to the more remote settlements.

The road became a busy thoroughfare. Over its long stretches passed a procession of stage and mail coaches, express carriers, emigrants and wagoners with heavy loads of freight. Wagon house yards were located along the line, where the tired horses rested over night beside their great loads, and taverns, famous in their day, were built at convenient points for the stages, that were constantly arriving and departing.

In 1832, before the road was in condition for fast travel,

the stage line of P. Beers was advertised to make the trip from Indianapolis to Dayton in two and a half days. This included stopping each night at a tavern. In later years it became the custom for many of the stages to drive straight ahead, day and night, until they reached their destination. In good weather they would average about 150 miles a day but in bad weather the time was much slower.



THE INN AT CAMBRIDGE CITY

Passenger and mail coaches were operated much like the railways of today, the rival lines fighting each other at times with great bitterness and competing in speed, accommodations and rates of tariff. However, the freight traffic was more important than the passenger business, as it is on the railroads today. Great wagons hauled the produce of the middle west over the mountains to the Potomac and brought back the products of mill and factory. This freight traffic created a race of wagoners who were strong and daring and many stories were told of their prowess.

The favorite wagons for hauling freight were of the Cones-

toga type, named for the valley in Pennsylvania where they were first built. These wagons had long deep beds, sloping upward at each end, to prevent the contents from shifting when going up and down the hills. The underbody was usually painted blue while the upper woodwork was bright red. The top was covered with canvas drawn over wooden bows. The wagons had wheels of unusual strength, most of them with broad treads, as tolls for broad wheels were less than for the narrow ones that tended to cut up the road bed. They made a brave showing and the wagoners were very proud of them. Some had bells hung on an arch over the hames of the harness that kept up a constant chime.

The most important official use of the National highway was as a means for transporting the United States mail and on this road was an important trunk system of mail coach lines. The Great Eastern and Great Western mails ran between St. Louis and Washington and many lesser mail lines connected with the Cumberland road at different points along the way, the principal ones being those from Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. Even compared with the fast mail trains of today the express mails of 80 years ago made excellent time.

In 1837 the schedule of the postoffice for the Great Western mail from Washington to Indianapolis, was 65½ hours and to St. Louis 94 hours. The ordinary mail coaches, which also carried passengers, made much slower time, it taking six days and twenty hours to reach Washington from Indianapolis.

The schedule of mails printed in the Indiana Journal in 1833 showed an eastern mail by Centerville three times a week and a mail to Terre Haute twice a week. The Government requirements of 1842 for carrying the mails east and west from Indianapolis called for coaches drawn by four horses to be run six days a week. The approach of the mail coach was announced by the blowing of a bugle to notify the postmaster to be ready for a quick change of mails. In a few minutes it

would be off again at full speed. The drivers of the fast mails were selected for their skill and daring and they took great pride in maintaining their schedules. When news of unusual importance was being carried, such as a president's message, extra relays of horses were provided along the route and every effort was made to establish a new speed record. At such times it was the part of wisdom for a traveler who had any regard for his personal comfort to wait for a slower coach.

The charm of the road in those picturesque days has appealed to many Indiana authors. In his narrative in verse, "A Child World", whose scenes are laid in an old homestead facing the highway, James Whitcomb Riley has called it a road that "blossoms with romance".

"Historic Indiana", by Julia Henderson Levering, contains a delightful account of a trip over the road to the east by stage when such a journey was an event to be planned by the traveler months in advance, "A new dozen of shirts, all of finest linen, must be hand stitched for the journey. His best blue broadcloth clothes and flowered waistcoat must be brushed, his gold fob polished, and the beaver hat remodeled and ironed." While his wife "would content herself with a made-over outfit, so that she might purchase 'brand new' peau de soie and French merino at the centers of fashion."

Benjamin S. Parker lived as a boy in Eastern Indiana near the great thoroughfare. In his recollections of those days in the eighteen-forties he says "a flood-tide of emigration poured along the great highway from June to November, such as the world seldom saw upon a single line before the modern railroad era.

"These companies of wagons were those of 'the movers' as we termed the families that were traveling from the older States to the new ones, to open farms and make homes there. Many families occupied two or more of the big road-wagons then in use, with their household goods, and their implements,

while extra horses, colts, cattle, sheep, and sometimes hogs, were led or driven behind.

"But everybody did not travel in that way. Single families, occupying only a single one or two horse wagon or a cart, frequently passed along, seeming as confident and hopeful as the others, while even the resolute family, the members of which carried their worldly possessions upon their backs or pushed them forward in hand-wagons, was not an unfamiliar spectacle.

"With the tinkling of the bells, the rumbling of the wheels, the noise of the animals, and the chatter of the people, as they went forever forward, the little boy who had gone down to the road from his lonesome home in the woods was naturally captivated and carried away into the great, active world that he had not before dreamed of.

"But the greatest wonder and delight of all was the stage-coach, radiant in new paint, drawn by its four matched horses in their showy harness, and filled inside and on top with well-dressed people, representatives of the commercial and professional life of the land.

"I think yet that there has never been a more graceful or handsome turnout than one of those fine old stage-coaches drawn by a splendid team of matched horses, and driven by such drivers as used to handle the ribbons between Richmond and Indianapolis. We could hear the driver playing his bugle as he approached the little town that lay just beyond us, and it all seemed too grand and fine to be other than a dream."

Every traveler was welcomed with generous hospitality by the settlers of those days but travel became so heavy that in self-defense some of those who lived along the highway were compelled to hang out tavern signs to indicate that some charges would be made. The usual rates were twenty-five cents for a bed or meal and many comfortable fortunes were made at these rates. The legislature of Indiana seemed to feel

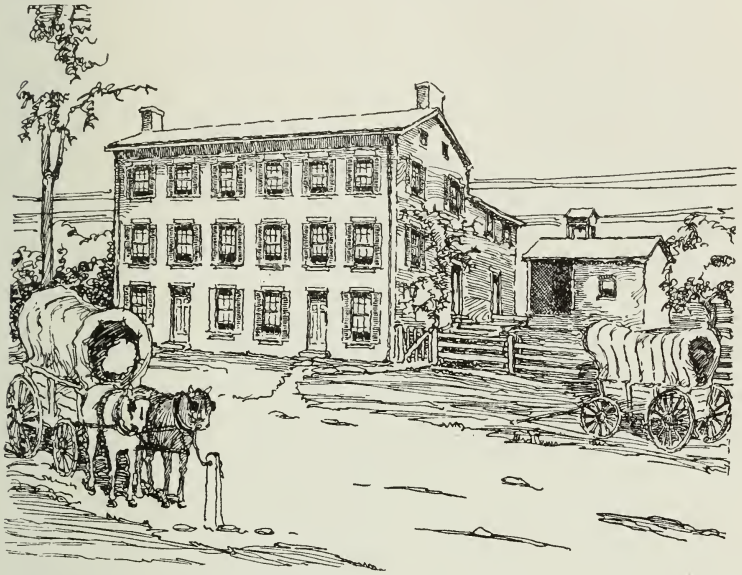
that this business needed some regulations and in 1832 passed an act providing that before a tavern keeper should be permitted to retail liquor he should have at least one spare room with two beds and bedding, good stabling for at least four horses and should keep posted in his public room the rates for food, lodging, stabling and liquor.

The first taverns of the west were built mostly of logs, often of but one or two rooms where the guests were glad to sleep together upon the floor, but better taverns arose beside the western roads even before the Cumberland road was under way. In Zanesville, Ohio, Robert Taylor built in 1807 a tavern from which he hung out the "Sign of the Orange Tree", where in 1810, when Zanesville was the temporary capitol of Ohio, the legislature made its headquarters.

The first tavern in Columbus, Ohio, was built in 1813 and bore the sign of "The Lion & the Eagle". The Neil House at Columbus, opened sometime in the twenties, was the headquarters of the Neil-Moore & Company line of stages and was the best known tavern in Ohio in the old coaching days.

Billy Werden's tavern in Springfield was the leading hostelry in western Ohio. At this point the stages to Cincinnati left the Cumberland road. At Richmond, Indiana, were the Starr tavern, Gilbert's tavern, Bayles' Sign of the Green Tree and Sloane's brick stage house, all of which shared in the business of the road. There was also at the corner of Main and Franklin "the Friends' Boarding House", known afterwards as Nixon's, and later on as the Huntington House. Here in 1842 Henry Clay, with the gallantry of a Kentucky gentleman and the strategy of an old political campaigner, kissed a number of Quaker ladies who had come to greet the distinguished visitor. This caused considerable comment, and the echoes of those kisses were heard in the next presidential campaign. At Centerville travelers found the White Hall Tavern and the Mansion House, a great center in the stage coach days, and at

Cambridge City was the United States hotel and the Inn, a long two-story frame structure where horses were changed by the stages running between Indianapolis and Dayton. This building was torn down several years ago.



Drawing by Wilbur B. Shook
THE HUDDLESTON HOUSE

Just west of Cambridge City still stands the Huddleston house, built in the early forties, a great three-story brick building where hundreds of emigrant wagons stopped on their way to the west. The wagon yard is still there and the huge brick oven where travelers were at liberty to do their baking. One morning, so the story goes, Mr. Huddleston found that a party of emigrants had departed at daybreak, forgetting their bread that had been put in the oven the night before. Hastily saddling a horse he followed them with the bread only to discover that their hurried departure had been caused by the fact that they had taken his best set of harness.

Farther west on the way to Indianapolis travelers would come to Dillon's Tavern and Stage Office at Knightstown, and at Greenfield they would find Gooding Hall and a rival tavern kept by the postmaster, William Sebastian. At Cumberland was a tavern known as Cumberland Hall.

In Indianapolis was Washington Hall, a frame tavern built about 1826 by James Blake and Samuel Henderson, on the south side of Washington street. This became a famous hostelry. In 1833 Mr. Henderson announced that additions making it the largest hotel in the state had been completed, including several large and commodious porches that afforded pleasant promenades and handsome views of the town. Three years later it was replaced by a brick structure bearing the same name that was for years the headquarters of the Whig Party in Indiana. For fifteen years it was in charge of Edmund Browning, whose able management added to its fame. Among his successors as landlord of this fine old tavern was General W. J. Elliott, whose son, Byron K. Elliott, afterwards became a Judge of the Supreme Court and the author of several well known legal text books.

Across the street from Washington Hall was the Mansion House, afterwards known as the Union Hotel, a two-story brick building kept by Basil Brown, a well known landlord of the time. This was Democratic headquarters until the building of the Palmer House, on the corner of Illinois street in 1841. At the corner of New Jersey street John Little opened a frame tavern in the summer of 1834. This was known for years as the "Sun Tavern" from a picture of the rising sun that was painted in brilliant colors on the swinging sign over the door. It was a favorite inn with the many travelers who came on horseback along the National road.

At Mt. Jackson, a few miles west of Indianapolis, was the home of Nathaniel Bolton, one of the founders of the first newspaper at the Capitol, and his gifted wife, Sara T. Bolton.

Their large rambling house, built partly of logs and partly of frame, was a center of hospitality, famous throughout the middle west. On account of financial troubles, caused by paying debts of friends for whom he had endorsed, Mr. Bolton found it necessary to turn his home into a tavern, which he conducted for nine years, when the farm was bought by the state as the site for the Central Insane Hospital. Mrs. Bolton has said that during these busy years she often acted as housekeeper, dairy maid and cook.

A few miles further west of Indianapolis was the Hartsock tavern at Bridgeport and the Ohio House at Plainfield. Just west of Mill Creek in Putnam County were the twin taverns known as the Tecumseh and Washington Hall that were well known in their day, and farther on in Putnamville was the Eagle House.

During the busy years of the road there were nine taverns along the road in Clay County alone. One of the best, known as Kennedy's, was at the crossing of the state road to Rockville and Bowling Green, while on the hill west of where Brazil now stands was Cunningham's Tavern, which later on was enlarged and a race course added where Terre Haute sportsmen trained their horses. Across the road from Cunningham's was the Usher homestead built in 1838 and thought by many to be the finest dwelling in that part of Indiana.

The first tavern in Terre Haute was the Eagle and Lion. When the highway reached the town, which then had about 800 inhabitants, the principal hotel was the Early House.

All along the road were wagon houses that offered their hospitality to the hundreds engaged in the freight traffic. Most of these wagon houses were situated at the edge of the larger towns where the prices were more reasonable than at the inns near the center of business. These wagon houses were surrounded by commodious yards for the horses. In all of the taverns and wagon houses were great fireplaces, in which logs were burned, whose fires lighted up the rooms during the

winter evenings and before which drivers and passengers were glad to spread their blankets and sleep through the night when other accommodations could not be had.

The taverns were the centers of the social life of the day. Many a dance was held on their puncheon floors to music played by the old time fiddlers. Judges, riding the circuits, together with the members of the bar, made them their headquarters and within their walls were planned many of the strategies of those heated campaigns that swept the old Indian fighter, William Henry Harrison, into office to the tune of 'Tippecanoe and Tyler Too", and that afterwards resulted in decisive victories for the Democrats, under the leadership of such men as James Whitcomb and Robert Dale Owen, and the carrying of the next presidential election by James K. Polk.

During these years both Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren traveled across Indiana along the National Road making speeches at the important towns. Clay had always been a champion of the road, but Van Buren had opposed internal improvements by the Federal Government and when his coach tipped over in the worst mud hole at Plainfield many thought that this supposed "accident" had been arranged to give him an object lesson on the importance of keeping the highway in repair.

After the Government stopped work on the road in Indiana it was turned over to the state in 1848. But the state would have none of it. The canals and railroad that it had built in a gigantic and ill considered scheme of internal improvements had resulted in financial disaster, and the state had begun to turn them over to such private companies as would agree to complete them and keep them in operation.

And so control of the National road through Hancock, Marion, Hendricks and Putman Counties was granted in 1849 to the Central Plank Road Company which covered the road with oak planks and put up a series of toll gates. In Indian-

apolis a toll gate was built at the bridge and another just east of town. This was considered by the citizens as taking an unfair advantage of the franchise and finally the eastern gate was removed, after the town council had agreed that the company should not be required to keep Washington street in repair. After a time the planks began to decay and the road was graveled. When an excavation was made for a sewer in Irvington not many years ago, some of the old planks were discovered in a good state of preservation.

An English traveler, Mr. J. Richard Beste, who visited "the interior of America" in 1851, noted in his book, "The Wabash", that tolls were not required to be paid on the Central Plank Road by those "going to or returning from militia musterings, from any religious meeting on the Sabbath, from any state, town or county election, or from any funeral procession."

Through Wayne County the road was taken over by the Wayne County Turnpike Company and was operated by it as a toll road for over forty years when it was finally purchased by the townships through which it passed and made a free gravel road, and in Henry county the road was operated for many years by a private company.

When the era of railroad building began, among the first projects were those for paralleling the National road in order to secure some of its great traffic. The Terre Haute & Indianapolis Railroad, the second railroad completed to Indianapolis, organized by Chauncey Rose of Terre Haute, was begun in 1851, construction work being carried on from both ends of the line. A year later the first train was run over the road. During the time of construction the gap in the line was connected by stage. Some idea of the amount of travel at that time may be had from the annual report for 1852, published just before the road was completed, in which Mr. Rose reported that, at the urgent request of the people, a box car for passengers had been attached to each iron train, bringing in

$100.00 a day. When the Indiana Central road from Indianapolis to Richmond was completed in the next year the National highway was paralleled by railroads for the entire distance, across the state.

Good homesteads were built all along the great highway. At first the better houses were built of hewed logs which were an advance over the round logs used in the early cabins. Then, with the coming of saw mills and the opening of brick yards, houses of both frame and brick were constructed. Saw mills were far apart and the use of sawed lumber generally meant a long haul, while bricks could be made at any place where a clay bank was available, so many of the early houses were built of brick.

There were no architects in Indiana at that time—perhaps that was an advantage, for the simple lines of the houses built by the settlers after the types of the homes from which many of them had come in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas are much more pleasing than the pretentious homes of a later period.

Many of the old homes have been torn down to make way for new construction, but a number still remain that are worthy of study. There are some beautiful doorways in Centerville and Cambridge City, those in the Lantz and Conklin houses being deserving of special mention. In the old Morton home at Centerville is a stairway so simple and yet so graceful that it is a delight to those who enjoy good design and good workmanship. Many other examples of good old time construction may be found in other towns along the road.

Back of these homes may still be found old time gardens filled with gay flowers and fragrant herbs, much as they were planted by the pioneers, and venerable apple trees, some of which may have been in the original orchards that were noted in the clearings by the surveyors over ninety years ago.

Today the old road is as busy as ever. The railways and

electric roads that connect the towns along the line carry a heavy traffic, yet a constant procession passes along the highway. Between the towns comfortable farm houses have been built along the road, so numerous that the traveler is never out of sight of one. In fact the old road that at one time ran through trackless forests is now a busy street throughout the one hundred and fifty miles within the state of Indiana.

It lacks perhaps the charm of a winding country road, yet it has the dignity that goes with the accomplishment of a great purpose. Stretching away straight as an arrow, cutting through the hills, crossing the valleys on sturdy embankments, bridging the streams with solid stone, it seems destined to be during the next century, as it has in the last, the greatest thoroughfare linking the east with the west.

January, 1919.

Appropriations Made by Congress for Work on the National Road in the State of Indiana

Act of March 3, 1829	$ 51,600.00
Act of May 31, 1830	60,000.00
Act of March 2, 1831	75,000.00
Act of July 3, 1832	100,000.00
Act of March 2, 1833	100,000.00
Act of June 24, 1834	150,000.00
Act of March 3, 1835	100,000.00
Act of July 2, 1836	250,000.00
Act of March 3, 1837	100,000.00
Act of May 25, 1838	150,000.00
	$1,136,600.00

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